

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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USIA FOR IEU

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: SOPN, PROP, SHUM, CZ
SUBJECT: PRAGUE TV TRIES TO EMBARRASS EMBASSY IN GABRIEL CASE

1. SUMMARY: ON 31 MAY, CZECH TELEVISION REPORTER OLDRIE VEJVODA AND VIDEO TAPE CREW CALLED UNANNOUNCED AT EMBASSY AND REQUESTED INTERVIEW WITH AMBASSADOR OR ANOTHER EMBASSY OFFICER ABOUT GABRIEL CHILD CUSTODY CASE. INTERVIEW WAS REFUSED AND VEJVODA WAS ASKED TO SUBMIT HIS REQUEST THROUGH PROPER CHANNELS. ALTHOUGH AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED STRONG DISPLEASURE AT THIS CLUMSY ATTEMPT TO EMBARRASS EMBASSY TO DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER SPACIL AND DIRECTOR OF SIXTH DEPARTMENT ZANTOVSKY AT RECEPTION THAT AFTERNOON, CZECH TELEVISION EVENING NEWS CARRIED THREE-MINUTE STORY ON VEJVODA EFFORTS TO SECURE INTERVIEW USING FOOTAGE SHOT INSIDE AND OUTSIDE EMBASSY COMPOUND. END SUMMARY.

2. FRIDAY, MAY 27, FIVE-MAN CZECH TELEVISION CREW COMPLETE WITH SOUND EQUIPMENT AND CAMERAS, CALLED UNANNOUNCED AT EMBASSY REQUESTING INTERVIEW ON TAPE WITH AMBASSADOR BYRNE CONCERNING GABRIEL CASE. MARINE GUARD ASKED CREW TO WAIT OUTSIDE AT ENTRANCE UNTIL HE WAS ABLE TO CONTACT PRESS OFFICER.

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3. WHILE WAITING, CREW CONTINUED TO SHOOT FOOTAGE IN COURTYARD, INCLUDING WIFE AND CHILD OF EMBASSY OFFICER WHO HAPPENED TO PASS BY. ALSO ATTEMPTED TO FILM EMBASSY OFFICER WHO WAS WAITING TO ESCORT AMBASSADOR TO CALL AT MINISTRY OF LABOR, BUT STOPPED WHEN HE WARNED THEM IT IS AGAINST CZECHOSLOVAK LAW TO FILM SOMEONE WITHOUT PERMISSION.

4. APAO THEN ARRIVED AND ADVISED VEJVODA THAT HE SHOULD SUBMIT HIS REQUEST THROUGH PROPER CHANNELS. VEJVODA SAID THAT IF AMBASSADOR NOT AVAILABLE, HE WOULD LIKE TO INTERVIEW SOME OTHER EMBASSY OFFICER. APAO REITERATED HIS SUGGESTION THAT VEJVODA USE PRPOER CHANNELS, AND CREW DEPARTED.

5. AMBASSADOR BYRNE, AT AFTERNOON RECEPTION, PROTESTED UNANNOUNCED INVASION OF EMBASSY PREMISES BY CAMERA CREW TO SPACIL AND ZANTOVSKY "AS UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR" AND "WOULD NOT BE TOLERATED." THEY DENIED KNOWLEDGE OF IT AND SPACIL SUGGESTED IT WAS SIMILAR TO PRACTICE OF TV NEWS CREWS IN WASHINGTON. SPACIL THEN SOUGHT OUT ZANTOVSKY, WHO LATER APPROACHED AMBASSADOR TO EXPRESS HIS UNDERSTANDING FOR AMBASSADOR'S POSITION AND AGREED TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER.

6. LATER SAME AFTERNOON, CONSULAR SECTION RECEIVED AN APPLICATION FROM VEJVODA AND CAMERAMAN TO GO TO U.S. TO INTERVIEW GABRIEL CHILDREN.

7. EVENING NEWS CARRIED THREE-MINUTE STORY ON VEJVODA INCIDENT. BEGINNING WITH VEJVODA STANDING ON STREET IN FRONT OF EMBASSY STATING HE ABOUT TO ATTEMPT TO INTERVIEW AMBASSADOR, FOOTAGE SHOWS REPORTER ENTERING EMBASSY COURTYARD, TALKING WITH MARINE GUARD AND THEN WAITING WITH EXPRESSION OF EXAGGERATED BOREDOM. THERE IS BRIEF CUT TO EMBASSY WIFE AND CHILD WITH NARRATOR COMMENTING THAT THIS IS AN AMERICAN MOTHER WHO, UNLIKE GABRIELOVA, DOES NOT HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT LOSING HER CHILD. TAPE IS INTERRUPTED SUDDENLY WITH NARRATOR SAYING THAT AN "EMBASSY OFFICER ASKED NOT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO BE PHOTOGRAPHED AND WE RESPECTED HIS REQUEST." AFTER A PERIOD OF BLANK TAPE, THERE FOLLOWED A SPLIT SECOND SHOT OF AMBASSADOR'S CAR AS HE WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE ON A CALL AND BACK OF APAO WITH REMARK "THERE GOES THE AMBASSADOR." STORY FINISHED WITH VEJVODA ADDRESSING THE CAMERA SAYING THAT NO ONE AT THE U.S. EMBASSY IS INTERESTED IN TALKING TO JOURNALISTS ABOUT CASE.

8. COMMENT: THIS INCIDENT IS LATEST IN SERIES DESIGNED TO EXPLOIT GABRIEL CASE TO EMBARRASS U.S. IT IS FIRST, HOWEVER, TO BRING AMBASSADOR AND EMBASSY DIRECTLY INTO LINE OF FIRE OF WHAT HAD UNTIL NOW REMAINED LONG-RANGE SNIPING AT U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS STAND. BYRNE

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